Esplanade Archives Times

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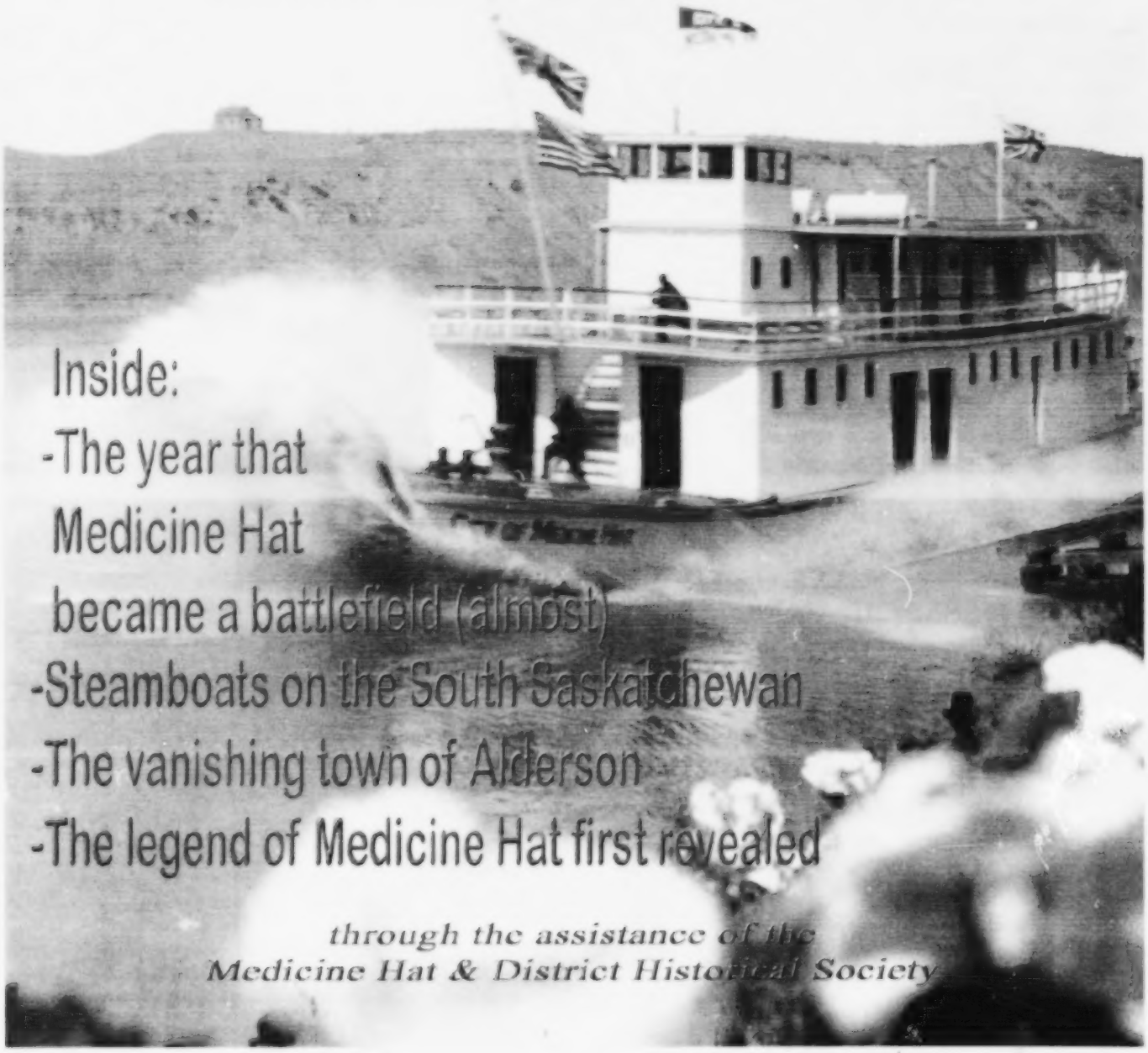

Inside:

-The year that Medicine Hat became a battlefield (almost)

-Steamboats on the South Saskatchewan

-The vanishing town of Alderson

-The legend of Medicine Hat first revealed

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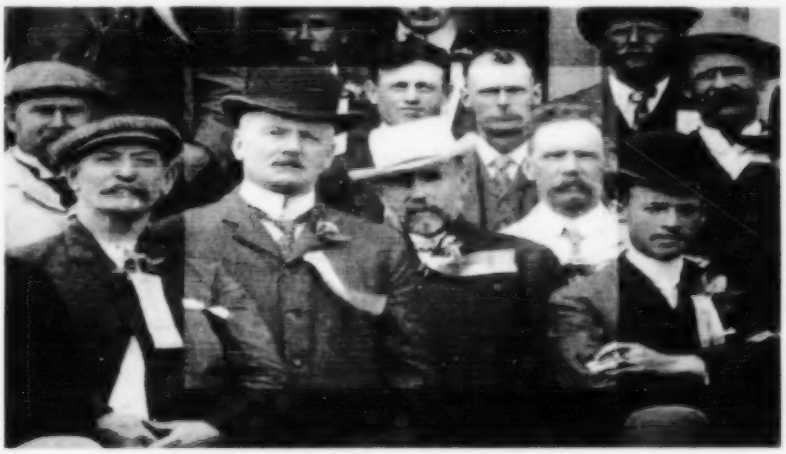

Captain of the Medicine Hat Home Guard Militia Tom Tweed stands with Bob McCutcheon and Bill Cousins. Esplanade Archives 85.2

The Legend of Medicine Hat

The mystical merman sea serpent named Soy-yee-daa-bee lives in the river just below Police Point where the river never freezes. James Sanderson early Pioneer heard the legend first hand from the people whose families had lived here for hundreds of years.

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A Time Like No Other

It was to be a year unlike any other in Medicine Hat. Rumors of war were spreading like wild fire across the country. Within a few short weeks Medicine Hat would be transformed into a war front staging area and worse yet, possible battlefield. Very shortly no less than five military units would be operating in the town doubling its size.

**** Page 3 *****

William Cousins: Tent Town Stories

Arriving in 1883 just prior to the arrival of the railway, his store blew over in a high wind. Undeterred he set it back up again the next day, being that it was a tent. His first customer was a notorious gunslinger, card player and horse thief whose demands tested the young green horn in the wild west town of Medicine Hat

**** Page 9 *****

The Second Golden Era of Steam Boats

It was exciting times for all, with massive parties, bands and merriment mixed in with the occasional catastrophic sinking.

**** Page 17 *****

The Vanishing Town of Alderson

- -Photo Story- -

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Archives for Everyone

The Esplanade Archives collects, preserves, and provides access to the documentary heritage (papers, photographs, maps, and audio-visual) of Medicine Hat and region. The Archives has operated for over twenty-five years, but now in the Esplanade, is offering more and easier access to the original records of the rich history of Medicine Hat and surrounding areas.

Visit www.esplanade.ca to see what is up and coming at the archives. Surf our on-line exhibitions, and search our holdings; view thousands of historical images, find out what records we have, and even listen to and watch historical audio and video. The amount of material available is increasing regularly.

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The Archives are indeed for everyone. We assist numerous people and organizations with numerous inquiries. These include current residents researching their historic homes, people with roots in the area compiling their genealogy, organizations writing their histories and so forth. We provide information for environmental assessment and developers, academic researchers, historians, sociologists, and others as well.

So give us a call (502-8582), check us out on-line (www.esplanade.ca), and come in for a visit.

Some of our collections

- City of Medicine Hat (1894 - 1989)
- Medicine Hat Chamber of Commerce (1900 - 1996)
- Medicine Hat General Hospital (1889 – 1989)
- John Bennett collection (1872 – 1995)
- Medicine Hat Rural School Division #4 (1904 – 1985)
- Medicine Hat School District #76 (1886 – 1986)
- Fire Insurance Maps, various communities (various dates)
- Cummins Rural directory maps (1920s)
- McCorkle studio collection (1957 – 1992)
- Gainsborough studio collection (1908 – 1979)
- Monarch Community Cable (1990 – 2001)
- CHAT Television (as well as collections from Orv Kope and Stan Weiler) (1952 – 1998)

Archives assistant David Stewart demonstrates to volunteer Nina Romeril how to search the on-line photo database from the archives web site at www.esplanade.ca .

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A Time Like No Other

by Brian Gale

It was to be a year unlike any other in Medicine Hat. Rumours of war were spreading like wild fire across the country. Hurried letters were written to relatives and loved ones down east addressing their frantic concerns. Clearly they didn't know what it was like here in Medicine Hat. Life was hard but it was peaceful. To some like Bill Cousins, it was laughed off as media exploitation and exaggeration of events of the kind we still see going on today. After all it was March in Medicine Hat, spring was near and everyone was looking forward to loosening the shackles of winter. But the rumors of war continued to spread and grew until even the citizens themselves were caught up in the frenzy. Something had to be done, so a town meeting was called to address the problem, head on.

Little did they realize that within a few short weeks Medicine Hat would be transformed into a war front staging area and worse yet, possible battlefield. It was 1885 and the Riel Rebellion was about to explode and Medicine Hat was to become a strategic point in the rapidly unfolding uprising. Within the next three months thousands of troops and associated military transport would be passing through to Calgary and beyond in aid of the impending conflict. Most notable of all would be the fact that very shortly no less than five military units would be operating in the town doubling its size.

Things did not go well at this first meeting. Adding to the tension were recent rumors of coming attacks first by the Blackfoot to the north and then by a nearby band of Cree. It was first proposed that the women and children should be put in the immigration shed by the CPR station for protection. Captain MacDonald of the mounted police declared, in a moment of bravado, that his command could easily stand off an attack by the Blackfoot warriors under Chief Crowfoot. This seemed to quell the tension briefly until it was suggested that the best protection that could be afforded the women and children would be to place them on the rotating CPR bridge, thus isolating them completely. To this Captain MacDonald (later nick named Paper Collar Johnny) protested vigorously because it would cut off his line of retreat and leave his men vulnerable on the north side of the river. He had at one instance bragged about wiping the earth with the whole Blackfoot nation and in the next breath expressed his concern about executing a retreat. Rancher Joe Wylie then became disgusted and accused the police officer of being both an insult and a disgrace to his uniform. The stress was finally relieved when all agreed to the immediate formation of a local militia with Tom Tweed as captain and Bob McCutcheon drill sergeant. The Medicine Hat Home Guard Militia was now born becoming the second para-military organization next to the North West Mounted Police.

Every man in the community who could walk was unceremoniously drafted. Cases of Snyder-Enfield rifles were soon received from Ottawa and dispersed amongst the recruits as the newly formed militia began to take shape. Drills were conducted every night, while the town began preparations for an attack. Night guards were set up in strategic positions throughout the town including: the railway bridge, downtown, brick yard and Seven Persons Creek coulee. The peace and tranquility that the small prairie town had only recently known was now gone. It had been replaced with fear and uncertainty. But this was just the beginning of the military build up that was about to unfold in Medicine Hat.

Galt Steamers docked at the rotating CPR Bridge in Medicine Hat.
Notman Photographic Archives, McCord Museum, Montreal N.0.25.1074 Medicine Hat Bridge, Saskatchewan River, Sk 1884 copied 1920

A Time Like No Other cont'd

Like other communities in the west, Medicine Hat had been briefly settled by Metis prior to the coming of the railway, and their petition to Ottawa for settler status had been completely disregarded. This was not uncommon. All across the west serious issues were being ignored by Ottawa. The most important of which were land claims by the Metis, as well as by First Nations peoples, ranchers, settlers and business men. All were waiting for government action.

However, on March 18th when Louis Riel formed his provisional government at Batoche, a wave of anger and dismay swept across the region. Western unity against Ottawa evaporated instantly as those with complaints distanced themselves from Riel's rogue actions. By seeking nation status outside of Canada, Riel had crossed the line. This was one step too far and in an instant, neighbours and friends became potential enemies. In the east, Ottawa reacted by setting in motion a military machine to put a stop to the insurrection.

Tim McShane, Assistant, Cultural History, displays one of the North West Rebellion era Snider-Enfields in the collection of the Esplanade Museum, Medicine Hat.

On March 28 the Minister of Militia in Ottawa authorized Pincher Creek rancher John Stewart to form four cavalry troops to patrol the region from Medicine Hat and the Cypress Hills to Fort Macleod. This time cash was received to purchase horses and supplies including the much-prized Winchester repeating rifles. Stewart's troops were to become the Rocky Mountain Rangers. Headquarters for the unit was to be in Medicine Hat close to the CPR with its strategic bridge across the South Saskatchewan. They were now the third military organization in Medicine Hat.

News of the cavalry formation was just being digested, when, on March 31 a special train arrived in Medicine Hat carrying the fourth military group, 35 fresh North West Mounted Police under the command of Superintendent Hershmer. Days earlier the 250 ton steamboat Northcote, which was beached on the shore of the South Saskatchewan, had been commissioned by Ottawa to carry military supplies down river to the impending battlefields. On board would be the military's new secret weapon, one of the famed Gatling guns.

Hershmer's men were to assist the boat's captain and protect it from possible attack and sabotage. By April 3 the Northcote was in the water but it would take six more days to get her operational and loaded. On the 9th she set sail for Saskatchewan Landing and a rendezvous with the military forces of General Middleton. On that same day British aristocrat and entrepreneur E. T. Galt and fifty men arrived in Medicine Hat on another special train. They were to prepare the three other steamboats docked in Medicine Hat for active service in the war. The 201 ton Baroness along with the 85 ton Alberta and the 16 ton tug boat Minnow all belonging to Galt's company were now officially commissioned to take part in the rebellion. In the coming weeks hundreds of tons of supplies and troops would be ferried as far north as Edmonton and east as Lake Winnipeg on the riverboats. The junction of the CPR and the South Saskatchewan made Medicine Hat a key crossroads in the transport of materials.

Riverboat Northcote taking on Supplies.
Glenbow Archives NA-363-50

A Time Like No Other cont'd

This onslaught of military activity must have been baffling to the local residents. What had become of their little town of 300 souls?

On April 29th the first cavalry troop of the Rocky Mountain Rangers departed Fort Macleod for Medicine Hat with six officers and sixty troops, including Kootenay Brown, the famous scout. Upon arriving they commenced patrols in regular cavalry formation through the town and down to the Cypress hills. Amazingly the military deployment to Medicine Hat was still not yet complete.

A few days after the arrival of the Rangers another special train arrived carrying Medicine Hat's fifth military deployment, 200 members of the Loyal Halifax Fusiliers under the command of Colonel James Bremner. Their orders were to establish base camp in Medicine Hat and protect the town. Their first task was to dig a trench system that became a strategic perimeter to their camp. It began at the top of what is now Sixth Avenue and Fifth Street, overlooking the flats, back to Cambridge Street then returning to Fifth Avenue.

At last it seemed Medicine Hat was secure and now able to confront any and all possible attackers. It now had 200 regular army foot soldiers, the command of four cavalry troops, an armed local militia, plus two contingents of mounted police. All that was needed was. . . . . an enemy. Fortunately for all concerned, one wasn't to be found.

As usual those in control in Ottawa were in the dark. To them the west was a vast hinterland they paid little attention to and had even less contact with. As such, they had no idea as to how far the insurgency would spread. Their greatest fear was that Riel would be able to unite not only the Metis but all of the First Nations in the West and perhaps even others. But it was not to be.

Chief Crowfoot at Gleichen had no interest in engaging Ottawa in a war. His people were suffering. The buffalo on which they had based their livelihood was long gone. They were dependant on the handouts of the government for their basic survival. Recently he had two of his own children die of tuberculosis and this had affected him deeply. What's more a decree from Ottawa prevented his warriors and hunters from getting bullets for their weapons.

The recent ethnic cleansing of neighboring tribes to the south would have made Crowfoot fearful that his own people could soon be subject to the same kind of treatment. It had been less than 10 years since the American government, broke treaty with the Sioux because of a spectacular natural resource find on their reserve. This ultimately led to General Custer's attempted genocide of the Sioux and the debacle of his own demise. Even more recent memory would be the attacks upon the Nez Perce just below the Cypress hills. They too were attacked by the American army as they attempted to escape into Canada. The futility of a war with the white man would have been crystal

Rocky Mountain Rangers in cavalry formation return from a patrol to the Cypress Hills.

A *Time Like No Other cont'd*

clear to the Chief. On April 12, in a succinctly written telegram to Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald, Crowfoot pledged allegiance to the Queen and gave his word to not join the insurrection. This did not , however, stop him from graciously assisting the wounded and retreating Cree as they withdrew from the battlegrounds of the rebellion.

In regards to the Metis, Louis Riel did not achieve solidarity with even his own people. Across the west many were joining home guards opposing the rebellion. In Medicine Hat James Sanderson, a much respected community stalwart and himself a Metis, had previously been involved with Louis Riel and had not come away with a positive impression. In 1870 he was in Red River during Riel's first rebellion, where he had been taken prisoner. Sanderson was one of the lucky ones in that encounter.

During the next three months the military forces encamped in Medicine Hat had one common problem– boredom. The Rocky Mountain Rangers found that their long patrols were tiresome, eventless exercises, with little reward. Many had joined the Rangers to "shoot Indians"

Chief Crowfoot with his family in 1884 (left) and in a studio portrait (right).

Glenbow Archives NA-29-1, NA-1104-1

but it soon became apparent that none were willing to step forward to satisfy their goals. In Medicine Hat the Halifax battalion set up a rifle range close to the Mounted Police barracks and to pass the time there were a number of staged games between soldiers, rangers, home guard, mounted police and townspeople.

There was some dissention between the Rangers and the Halifax battalion as neither Captain Stewart nor Colonel Bremner were willing to subjugate themselves to each other and their forces reflected this in their contact. The Rangers would ride their horses amongst the tents of the Halifax "feet soldiers" as they were called, pulling tent pegs and causing havoc.

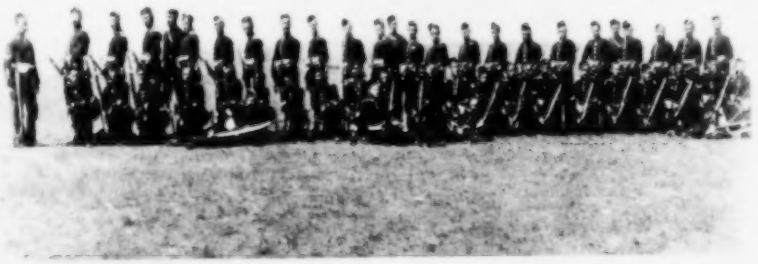
Alcohol became another pass time as accounts of Rangers whooping, hollering and shooting their guns off as they rode through town were not uncommon. Unfortunately,

Members of the Halifax battalion at left visit the NWMP barracks at Police Point June 15, 1885. William cousins and his wife are in centre group.

Esplanade Archives 525-10

two of the Halifax Fusiliers drowned while swimming in the river, becoming some of the earliest recorded deaths in the town.

Ultimately, the rebellion was put down at Batoche. Riel was captured and later hanged. On the positive side, Ottawa was forced to move ahead with solving land claims and other complaints from the West. Not surprisingly the rebellion created an economic boom in small prairie towns like Medicine Hat as the soldiers and military forces required supplies that Ottawa paid dearly for. The only regret was that people had to die in order for the government to act and address the grievances of its people. By early June it was evident that the rebellion was over. Drills for the home guard were cancelled due to lack of attendance. Many of the Rocky Mountain Rangers returned to the farms and ranches from whence they came. When the Halifax battalion got its orders to return home it was suddenly all over. By July the little village of Medicine Hat returned to normal and all vestiges of this strange military event slowly vanished. The trench system dug by the fusiliers on the brow of the south east hill was visible for nearly 30 more years, and must have been a great play site for children.



Number 3 company Halifax battalion in Medicine Hat

Glenbow Archives NA-1323-7

Ultimately, this event would become just one of the interesting episodes in Medicine Hat's history. But now at least the way had been cleared, the pioneering of the west was set to begin, and it was to be a long, slow and arduous journey.

Residents gather for some community libations behind the Saskatchewan Brewery in Medicine Hat. Kootenay Brown center, appears relaxed along with members of the Rocky Mountain Rangers, First Nations People, NWMP and (possibly) troopers from the Halifax Regiment.

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The Legend of Medicine Hat

"Finally his wife was sacrificed and given to the serpent . . ."

Image courtesy of Hugh Dempsey

James Sanderson –pioneer storyteller

James Sanderson, interpreter, businessman, rancher and author was a legendary Medicine Hat frontiersman. Born in 1848, his family worked with the Hudson Bay Company at York Factory in Manitoba. Later he hunted buffalo on the plains and was imprisoned by Louis Riel in the first Riel uprising at the Red River. In 1872 he married Maria McKay and settled with her family in the Cypress Hills. Here, along with duties such as interpreter and scout, he hunted buffalo, supplying the North West Mounted Police at Fort Walsh with meat. Later, as the buffalo disappeared, he brought a herd of cattle from Montana to supply the police. With the coming of the Canadian Pacific Railway in 1882 the Sanderson's and McKay's moved to Medicine Hat assisting both the North West Mounted Police and the railway crews with supplies and freight.

James Sanderson

Esplanade Archives 243.1

Being Métis placed him in a unique position. As he could speak both Cree and Blackfoot he became a natural communication link between the First Nations People who had inhabited the region for years and the Europeans who were swiftly moving in position did not go unnoticed and in the spring of 1894 he was asked to recount the mythology and stories of the area as told to him by the First Nations People. The first story he told was the Legend of Medicine Hat.

James Sanderson died in 1902 and is buried in the old cemetery in Kin Coulee

How Medicine Hat was named, Medicine Hat News 1894

There is a certain part of the South Saskatchewan River just below where the old North West Mounted Police barracks were located, on which, even during the most severe winters, no ice forms. This hole or opening in the river is regarded with great interest by the Blackfoot peoples, as it is believed to be the breathing place of the Great Spirit who lives in the river and who, when he shows himself, assumes the form of a serpent. As an indication of the widespread interest in this particular spot, it may be mentioned that during last winter (1893), which was more than usually severe, I was asked by the Blackfoot Indians whether it had frozen over. On learning that the opening was still there, the Indians evinced great delight. Had it been otherwise, they would have taken it as proof that the Great Spirit had either died or gone elsewhere to some other breathing place.

Far back in Indian tradition, it is said that one of a hunting party of Blood Indians was sent forward to reconnoiter the country and see if buffalo were to be met with in any numbers. He was accompanied by his newly-married wife and a favorite dog, the latter bearing the travois – a cross pole arrangement to which the dog was harnessed – for the purpose of carrying some share of the traveling outfit. One evening, the Indian camped by the river side. As he was walking along near the opening in the river, the serpent appeared to him and told him, "If you throw the flesh of your wife into the opening, you will become a great warrior and medicine man". The Indian returned to his tepee and repeated to his wife the words of the serpent. His wife at once expressed her willingness to die for the good

Where the river never freezes, Police Point.

Image courtesy of Liam Gale

The Legend of Medicine Hat cont'd

of the tribe and in obedience to the call of the Great Spirit. Her husband, however, was reluctant and, instead of his wife, killed the dog. Carrying its carcass to the opening, he threw it in with the request that the spirit might be pleased to accept his dog as a substitute for his wife. The spirit refused, and declared that, unless the Indian would sacrifice the wife, he could do nothing for him. The man returned and informed his wife accordingly, and she again expressed her willingness to comply with the demand. Finally, she was sacrificed and her flesh given to the spirit, who then directed the man to stay all night on the island near by, to rise early next morning and, as the sun rose, to proceed towards the cutbanks lying to the east. At the base of one of the cutbanks he would find a bag containing medicine and a hat trimmed with ermine. He was instructed to bring back the medicine bag and the hat with him to the Spirit who would explain the purpose of the hat and the efficacy of the medicines. The hat, he was told, was to be worn only in war, and would ensure victory to the wearer. Tradition has it that the Indian became famous as a medicine man and warrior.

William Cousins: Tent Town Stories

William Cousins, pioneer, businessman, entrepreneur, author and early mayor of Medicine Hat came west with the advent of the railway. Bent on establishing a store in Calgary he purchased his stock in Winnipeg in the spring of 1882 and began to make his way west. Although the railway was officially completed to Swift Current, it took several days and multiple bribes to get his boxcar/ living quarters to within twelve miles of Maple Creek where the line ended. He then walked into town and persuaded a group of teamsters, with an inducement of free local beer and cigars to bring his outfit into Maple Creek. The teamsters took only the cigars, as they knew the beer was bad. Cousins didn't and regretted drinking it for many years after. Jules Quesnelle was then hired with his teams of covered wagons to make the trek to Calgary. Several days and multiple adventures later they reached the top of what is now Porters Hill to behold Medicine Hat, "A Glorious sight- the trees on the banks of the Ross and Seven Persons Creek were just coming out in leaf and looked good to us after our long journey over the bald prairie."

Later that day Quesnelle told Cousins that he didn't trust the ferry crossing the river and if he wanted to go to Calgary he would have to find someone else. Cousins agreed as he was now broke and didn't have the money to pay him anyway. That night, after he set his store up in a tent he received his "first and best customer".

From "Old Timer Tells. . . ." by William Cousins Lethbridge Herald, February 8, 1938

He didn't look like what I wanted at the moment. The revolver he had at his hip engaged my attention. I didn't know if it was going to be a sale or a shot. If it was a sale of any size I could eat. If it was a shot I was up in the air as to where I could duck. However, he began the conversation that ensued. He said, "This is quite a store you have kid. Is it by any chance a branch of John Wanamaker's?" (a big New York retailer). said "No, it is not. I don't know Wanamaker." Then he said, "That's a big pile of ready-to-wear suits you have. Do you suppose I could get a fit out of that lot?" I had never sold a suit of clothes in my life. Didn't know if a man should try on a perfect thirty-six or a fifty-six. I was a grocer, and knew nothing about suits or ladies unmentionables, hardly knew the difference between a bucksaw and a tack hammer. However I said, "Look them over and try one on." We tore into the pile, and he got hold of a suit that he liked the looks of and said, "Where can I try this on?" I said, "Over there by that stock of flour." He was quite a time it seemed to me before he said, "Throw me in a suit of heavy underwear and a pair of socks, I'm pretty crummy."

W. Cousins, far right, Ontario, 1880.

Esplanade Archives 17.13

Medicine Hat: Tent town, as Bill Cousins would have seen it upon his arrival.

Esplanade Archives 152.2

Tent Town Stories cont'd

I soon found out why the delay. He had to take off chaps, top-boots, his armour and other things. When he came into view again he was a different man. He was trying to see what the coat looked like from behind, and running his hands fondly over the sleeves. All of which took his attention off the pants. They came half way down over his boot tops. Finally he said, "That's good cloth. How does it fit behind?" If I had been in my right mind I would have laughed for he was a sight. I just said "It's all right". Then he wanted a hat and some other things that I could not find if we had them. Up to this point there had never been any reference to price, he just said, "How much do I owe you?" I figured it at $39.50. He pulled out a roll that made me wonder how there come to be so much money in one place, gave me the exact amount - I couldn't have made the change, and took a seat on the head of a barrel of sugar. He pulled his feet under him like all cowboys do when wanting a rest and I asked him to have a cigar.

When he got it lighted he said, "You didn't steal this plunder you have here in Ontario, did you?" My indignant reply was, "No, I bought and paid for them in Winnipeg." "Well, don't be a damn fool. You are cutting your profit too close, I would have had to pay fifty dollars for this layout in Macleod. Get wise or you'll go broke." A few days after this we were putting things in store shape when we heard shouting and shots, ran out and saw a band of what we took to be cowboys on horseback firing their revolvers in the air. At the head of the bunch was my first customer. After they got by we ran over to the

The wrong end of a colt 44. This peacemaker ca. 1875 part of the Esplanade Museum collection would have been a sought after item by a gunslinger like Cracker Box Bill.

Tent Town Stories cont'd

Cosmopolitan hotel where Casey the proprietor was standing. He told us they were the horse thieves and whisky smugglers from Montana. They had a camp on Seven Persons Creek where you could buy "Montana rot gut" for five dollars a quart. If you took an over-dose it was almost certain death. The name of the leader was Bill Perdue, otherwise Cracker Box Bill, a notorious killer from the United States.

Cracker box came into our tent the next day followed by four others. The first words he used were, "Boys this store-keeper stole this layout in Ontario and is selling cheaper than the other stores. He isn't a bad guy to deal with, just a little tender in the feet at present".

We didn't see him again for nearly a week, when he walked in alone, and taking a big roll of bills out of his pocket, said, "Here put this in your safe I want you to be my banker". Not liking the idea I said, "We have no safe, why don't you keep it yourself." His reply was, "I got to get some sleep don't I? If I go to sleep with those robbers all around me I might get short changed. Don't be a fool, dig a hole under that barrel of sugar and put this roll in it. No one but you and me will know it's there."

I still disliked the proposition and said, "I have to sleep myself sometimes too, and I won't be responsible for your money if someone comes and wants it." He replied, "That's all right. I'll see that you get your sleep. You will be as well taken care of as if you were my own child."

I took his money, but did not hide it under that barrel. I had what I thought was a better place where I kept our own money, which was growing from the sale of the goods we had. Cracker Box used to come in and ask me to let him have a few dollars as he had got the short end of the poker game the night before. He kept drawing out and depositing. I never counted Bill's roll, never knew how much there was in it. I was just as free and easy about my system of banking as they tell us the big shots are today. I had no charter from either government, provincial or dominion. I didn't need such to run my bank in those good old days.

One day Cracker Box came in and said, "Give me what is left of that roll. I am going to Calgary to set up a tent poolroom where the boys can play and get all the Montana whiskey they can pay for at reasonable prices. He did do as he said he would until the North West Mounted Police got his record from Montana. He left one dark night for parts unknown. The police who always get their man found him in Prince Albert and took him to Regina for trial. I never saw him again. He was my first and best customer, not only buying for himself but telling the world what a good place he had found, where they are having an every day bargain sale.

William Cousins store ca. 1903 located at the site of the present Assiniboia Hotel. Esplanade Archives 20-2

Challenging Times for first Medical Staff

by Brian Gale

On June 4, 1890, when the Medicine Hat General hospital officially opened, a milestone was accomplished in the development of western Canada.The first hospital between Winnipeg and Vancouver was now complete. Since its inception under the guidance of Canadian Pacific Railway superintendent John Niblock, it led a storied and stellar rise into existence. It had only been 18 months since fundraising began and now it was finished, glorious in its splendor. Not only was it a striking example of Victorian architecture, it was a truly modern functional hospital. Medicine Hat was now the envy of every community in the west, including Calgary and Regina, both of which had failed in their attempts to build hospitals. the challenge was not over, as it would soon be discovered that operating the first hospital would be an even more difficult task than its construction.

There is little doubt that when the first staff approached the hospital they were struck with awe at the sight. The stylish mansard roof with windowed cupola towered graciously over the polished hand hewn sandstone exterior. Equally impressive was the entrance with its gilded front doors leading into a vestibule surrounded by stained

glass. Venturing inside they would have toured the 8 wards comprising 24 beds, an operating theatre, an isolation ward, reception room, a library/reading room, kitchen, and a furnace room with its patented coal fired Plaxton hot water heater had all the amenities required of a modern hospital. Finally they would have ventured to the second floor and under one half of the mansard roof found the nurses residence. For their exclusive use, bedrooms and a sitting room handsomely appointed in the style of the day. more could be asked for, the opulence and professional outlay of the structure would have been entirely convincing that this would be a fine place to work. Would there have been any indication of the challenges they were about to face. When the grit, determination and sacrifice of pioneering come to mind one has to look no further than the first staff of the Medicine Hat General Hospital.

Medicine Hat General Hospital, 1890.

Esplanade Archives 17.8

In charge would be Dr. Albert Olver the first medical superintendent. Graduating at the top of his class from the Manitoba Medical School in 1886, Olver had already been in Medicine Hat for two years, working as the railway physician under Mr. Niblock. regarded by the community at large, his appointment as medical superintendent came as no surprise. Reporting directly to him was the nursing staff, Miss Grace Reynolds, who would hold the position of Matron, had a direct link to the very genesis of nursing. She had trained at Leeds in England under a Miss Gordon who had been a pupil of Florence Nightingale. to her would be Miss Mary Ellen Birtles a recent graduate of the Winnipeg General Hospital. In the coming months the three would work closely together.

From their nicely appointed residence, Miss Reynolds and Miss Birtles set to work taking command of the operations of the facility.Amazingly they were the only staff for the entire institution.The required daily chores and tasks pushed the two to their limits.The apparent convenience of the in house residence quickly dissolved into a "twenty four hours a day, seven days a week" commitment.1939, in her memoirs Miss Mary Ellen Birtles would recall:

"Miss Reynolds and I managed the work between us. She prepared the meals and looked after the downstairs work; I attended to the furnace and did the upstairs work, dusting etc. besides attending to the patients. When any surgical work had to be done we had to arrange the work accordingly. Miss Reynolds gave the anesthetic and I looked after the instruments and waited on the doctor. There was no sterilizer so we had to resort to boiling the instruments in a large sauce pan with a steamer on it for towels and dressings".

The conditions were such that if the nurses were able to attend church on Sunday, one in the morning and the other in the afternoon, that was their time off for the week. this single weekly exception, the two were on duty.

To complete this seemingly impossible list of duties, an enormous amount of discipline and focus was required. This resulted in at least two protests being launched by patients complaining about the strict regulation and control enforced by Miss Reynolds. In each of the instances Miss Reynolds would offer her resignation as a solution to the problem. Mr. Niblock and the Board of Directors knew better, however, and her first two resignations were not only refused, but returned with a humble apology and a raise in pay.

The evidence of the staff's labour was no more apparent than when the first annual report to the Board of Directors was delivered in January of 1891. Olver spoke first, reporting on the myriad of conditions and diseases that had been treated. In addition 101 operations had been conducted on the 124 patients that had been resident. Each patient had stayed an average of 28.2 days, resulting in a total of 3,501 patient treatment days. Not surprisingly, Mr. Niblock went on to speak of the untiring zeal of the nursing staff in completing these duties. Clearly the first year of operation at the Medicine Hat General had been difficult, but none the less, a success.

The trials of endurance, however, were not over and the second year of operation at the Medicine Hat General Hospital would prove to be even more difficult than the first.The year began with an array of broken and crushed

bones from ranching and railway accidents. With this were a variety of dislocations, abscesses and diseases common to life in the frontier. But then, as spring turned to summer, a new and deadly threat emerged - the dreaded typhoid.

A rampaging epidemic hit the community hard and every bed in the hospital soon had an afflicted patient in it.. Olver worked doggedly along with the nurses, then suddenly became feverish himself, contracting the disease. Soon he was bed ridden beside his patients. Nurse Birtles yielded next and a Miss Locke was quickly brought in to assist. Dr. Calder, a former professional partner of Dr. Olver's was summoned and stepped in to assist with hospital duties. Next Dr. Haultain from Maple Creek was sent for, followed by Dr. D.B. Brett from Banff each providing needed support. For three weeks Dr. Olver's condition worsened, then improved, then worsened again as his case become one of the most severe. The visiting physicians did the best they could but it was to no avail. The hospitals first medical superintendent Dr. Albert Olver succumbed to typhoid, dieing at 8:30 p.m., August 31, 1891 at the young age of 30 years.

Miss Mary Ellen Birtles & Miss Grace Reynolds Medicine Hat's first Nurses.

Esplanade Archives 758.6, 61.21

The impact of this event deeply affected not only the institution but the community at large. Despite the ongoing epidemic, a large and fitting funeral was prepared by the Masonic Lodge, with assistance from the Odd Fellows Society. For two days his body lay in state at the Masonic Hall before a long funeral cortege wound its way through the town. brief stop was made at Dr. Olver's former residence on North Railway Street, where his wife and "two prattling babes" joined in before making its way to the old cemetery behind St. Barnabas Church. mayor W.M. Finlay conducted an impressive burial service and then Dr. Albert Olver was laid in his final resting place.

Mercifully, new cases of typhoid began to diminish, and the hospital and town were finally released from the pall of the epidemic. After six weeks, Nurse Birtles was able to successfully fight the disease and recover. In the interim, Dr. Calder was appointed as temporary Medical Superintendent and then in November his position made permanent. This was closely followed by the third resignation of Miss Reynolds. This time it would not be refused and returned. She was getting married, and would soon become Mrs. Calder. There was much joy at this cheerful news and Mr. Niblock spoke eloquently of her good service. As a parting gift a $50 silver tea service was purchased and presented on behalf of the hospital. It was the last major event of the second year of operation of the still new but now experienced institution of the Medicine Hat General Hospital. The toll had been high, but the community and the hospital had survived and things were looking up.

The feelings of optimism in the New Year of 1892 were clearly evident. Discussions of improvements, additions and modifications dominated board meetings. At the second annual general meeting Mr. Niblock attempted to resign his position as President but the rest of the board would have no part of it - he was re-elected by acclamation. In the coming months the purse strings would loosen and a cook was hired, relieving the nurses of some of their toils. This was closely followed by hiring a janitor, further improving conditions. When the talk began about hiring a second doctor it became clear that the pioneering stage of the Medicine Hat General Hospital was over and that a new phase of growth and development was about to begin.

Archivist Philip Pype reviews the hand written hospital minute book from September, 1891. The death of Doctor Olver brought the town and the institution to their knees.

The future was now visibly set. There would be other epidemics and challenges ahead but each would be overcome and progress made. Soon Medicine Hat's first school of nursing would be established by the new Matron, Miss Agnus Miller. With the assistance and collaboration of the now retired Mrs. Grace Calder the school would run for over 75 years providing hundreds of qualified nurses not only for the Medicine Hat General but western Canada and the world. Now, over 100 years later, it is difficult to comprehend that Alberta's hospital legacy began in such a small but striking Victorian structure in the frontier town of Medicine Hat..

Esplanade Archives Times
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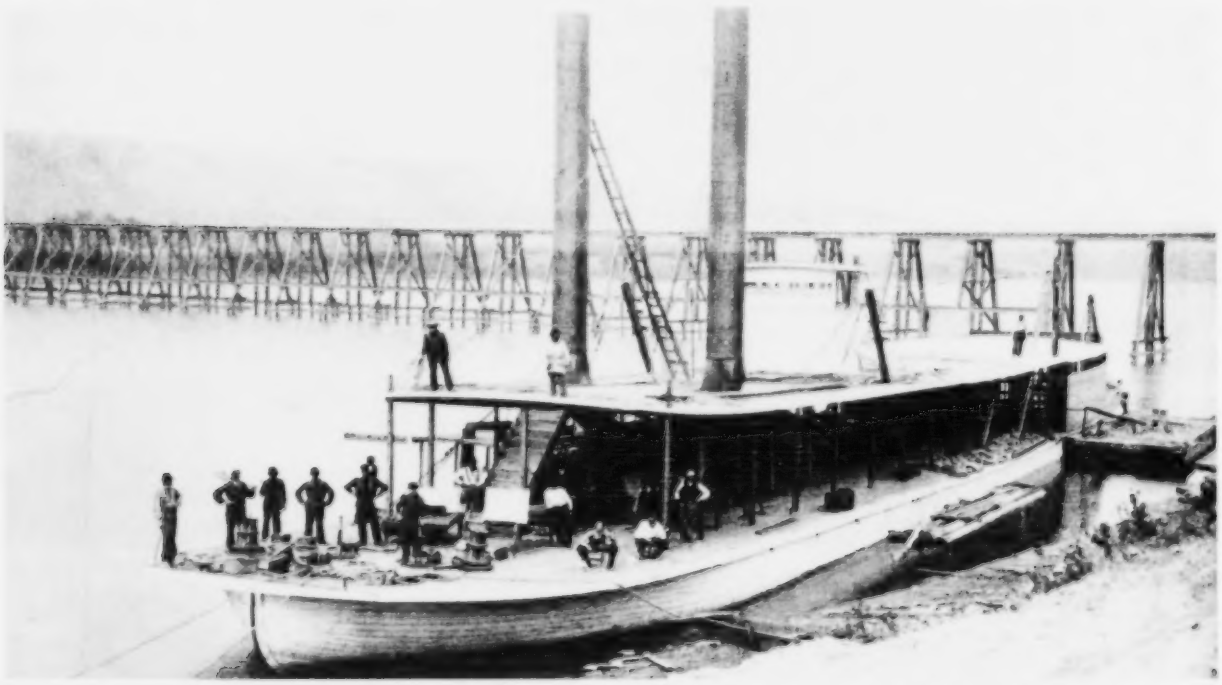
The First Era of Steamboats on the South Saskatchewan

by Brian Gale

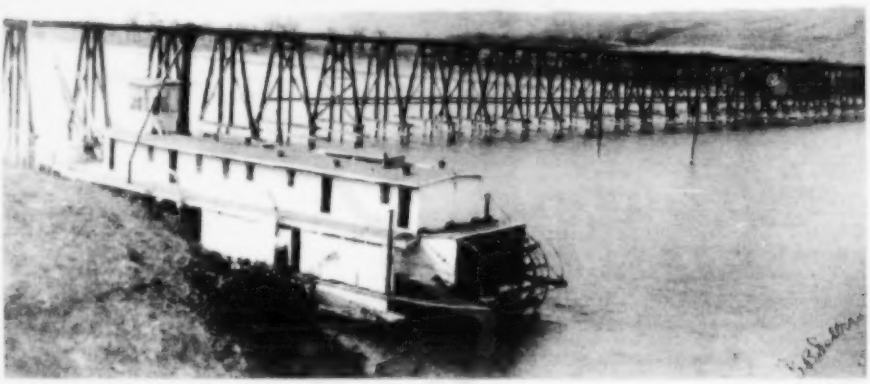
It's hard to imagine a time when stern wheeled steamboats plied the South Saskatchewan River. To do so requires one to think of an age before processed fossil fuels and the automobile, back to oxen trains and the Red River cart. Only then can the viability of river transportation on the prairies be comprehended. Water transport by canoe had been used for centuries by First Nation's People, but it was the invention of the steam engine that dramatically increased the size of boats used on inland waterways. the South Saskatchewan River there were two eras of steamboats plying its waters, each unique.

Curiously it was the arrival of the steam powered railway in 1883 that heralded development of the first steamboats at Medicine Hat. At the time it appeared that the junction of the railway and river would have commercial importance. Upstream and to the west, Sir Alexander Galt had just entered into a lucrative contract with the C.P.R. to bring coal from Lethbridge to Medicine Hat. His first attempt by horse and wagon, although successful, was impractical, as an army of men and wagons were needed for the one hundred mile journey. experience gave way to the simple idea of floating coal down stream on barges and then hauling them back with steamboats. This was the impetus for the construction of the "Baroness". Named for one of Galt's wealthy British shareholders, the boat was the largest vessel ever on the South Saskatchewan. At 171 feet in length, thirty feet wide and weighing 360 tons fully loaded, she had a formidable presence on the river. Her fifty horsepower steam locomotive engine was added just in time for the first train crossing the river at Medicine Hat.



The "Baroness" received her final fitting of hardware upstream of the temporary C.P.R. bridge. Constructed of fir from the Porcupine Hills, the hull was assembled in Lethbridge then floated to Medicine Hat where the boilers and steam engine were installed.

Glenbow Archives NA-670-13



Seen here below the C.P.R. bridge, the "Lily" was designed and built in the Clyde shipyards in Scotland. The boat was then shipped in sections to Canada and reassembled above Lake Winnipeg for use on the Saskatchewan River.
Esplanade Archives MH 294.2

Meanwhile to the east the Winnipeg & Western Transportation Company had just sent the steamboat Lily to explore the south branch of the river. The company which had been plying the North Saskatchewan for ten years was eager to expand. The Lily was a fine Scottish built vessel, with a steel hull and ten state rooms on the upper deck. Measuring 100 feet long and 24 feet wide, it was smaller than the Baroness but still weighed in at over 100 tons empty. She arrived in Medicine Hat on August 3, 1883, just as the Baroness was preparing to set off on her maiden voyage to Lethbridge.

Unfamiliar with the changing water levels of the South Saskatchewan both parties were surprised as the river dropped six inches in two days. spite of this, the determined Galt set off for Lethbridge to bring his first load of coal. The waters must have been hazardously shallow as he was able to return with only one light load. Meanwhile, the Lily took on sixty five tons of supplies which combined with the falling water made her eighteen inches closer to the bottom. Despite this, she set off bound for Prince Albert on August 29. Several hours later at Drowning Ford a submerged rock tore an eight foot hole in her starboard side. In minutes the boat sank, with all hands on board – in three feet of water. Stranded, the crew proceeded downstream in rowboats taking several days to make it to the newly formed colony at Saskatoon. The Lily was a total wreck and was written off by her insurers for $20,000.Her remains littered the riverbank for the next fifty years and were slowly carried away by successive spring floods.

In the fall of 1883, undeterred by this disaster and his own meager results, Galt set about revising his plan. He would just have to haul more coal earlier in the next season. To do this he would need two more vessels and twenty one additional barges. the spring of 1884 the steamboat "Alberta" was the first to appear. Named for the same Royal Princess as the future province, the boat was assembled by experienced Missouri riverboat men with oak shipped in from Minnesota. Similar in size to the Lily, she was 100 feet long and twenty feet wide with a thirty horsepower engine. Next was the tug boat "Minnow", brought in on a railway flat car from Winnipeg. Measuring in at 73 feet long and ten feet wide, with a mighty six horsepower engine, she would provide assistance maneuvering the barges along the water way. The fleet was ready for the start of high water on May 24, 1884. Over the next month the boats were worked feverishly with the Baroness making nine trips and the Alberta eight. All the while the river slowly receded making each successive trip more grueling and laborious. D. J. Whitney recounted his experiences years later; "The boat hands were out in the water most of the time with poles prying the boat off bars. It was hard, grueling work and we often lay down to sleep for a very few hours in our wet clothes. We were continually running out of fuel (on the return trips) for our boilers and as there were seams of coal along the river banks, we dug it out and packed it in sacks down to the boat."

On June 28th with the water falling to an unworkable level, Galt had no option but to tie up his fleet. It had only been one month

The Steamboat "Alberta" begins to take shape downstream from the C.P.R. bridge in 1884.
Esplanade Archives 72.72

since they began and the season was now over. Four thousand tons of coal had been delivered which, while not insignificant, was no where near the contract required by the railway. A famously pragmatic man, Galt set to work on another solution for transporting the coal, but this one did not involve riverboats. The future for the coal fleet appeared to be bleak, but then suddenly a reprieve appeared which ultimately resulted in a final glorious ending.

In the spring of 1885 Canada was suddenly awakened to the calls of rebellion by Métis leader Louis Riel. Headquarters for his newly declared provisional government were at Batoche, downstream from Medicine Hat on the South Saskatchewan River. Ottawa, not accepting this treasonous turn of events, rapidly mustered thousands of soldiers and sent them west to put down the insurrection. Under the command of General Middleton the forces soon realized that the Galt steamboats beached at Medicine Hat could become a decisive tool in the military campaign. Adding to this, the steamboat "Northcote" had recently sailed to Medicine Hat. Combined with the Galt steamers, this made four capable vessels moored at Medicine Hat. they were all commissioned for use by the military forces under General Middleton.

Soon each vessel was loaded with tons of military supplies including a famed Gatling Gun. Northcote, the first to leave, would see direct military action. With a company of riflemen on board she was used as a gunboat and sailed into Batoche in a diversionary action meant to assist Middleton's ground forces. the proverbial sitting duck, the slow moving boat was an easy target, sustaining significant damage from the Métis. Her thin wooden walls proved inferior to the bullets from musket rifles and the soldiers were forced to line up mattresses and furniture for additional protection. Meanwhile, the Captain abandoned the wheel house for the apparent safety of the lower deck. As the soldiers braced themselves against the onslaught, a steel ferry cable was lowered by rebel forces ripping off her smokestacks. Now, with hot embers from the boilers threatening to burn the wooden vessel, the engines were shut off. Powerless and still under attack the crew let the vessel drift for several hours until it was out of reach of the rebel forces before proceeding with repairs.

Regardless of this small victory the Métis were quickly defeated by Middleton's overwhelming ground forces and the rebellion was nearly over, save for the capture of combatants who had retreated northward. After the battle, the riverboat Alberta was fashioned into a hospital ship with four canopied barges tied up around her, one carrying milking cows, another bearing wood for the boilers and the other two housing the wounded. Slowly she made her way to Lake Winnipeg where the injured were transferred to lake steamers and taken south. Meanwhile the Baroness became a troop carrier, voyaging as far as Edmonton, retrieving and disembarking Middleton's forces as they moved about on the North Saskatchewan River.

Museum technician Kim Frey inspects a ship's telegraph in the permanent gallery at the Esplanade. It likely came from the Baroness.

Thankfully the rebellion was brief and by July the coal fleet returned to Medicine Hat. An attempt was made to sail the boats to Lethbridge but the low water levels forced the larger Baroness to return to Medicine Hat. Next to the railway bridge she was dismantled and her engines removed. They were then taken to Lethbridge by way of Galt's latest venture, a narrow gauge railway. The Alberta was dismantled in Lethbridge and like the Baroness her engines were used in the coal mines. The only vessel to survive was the Minnow which was sold to a company at Battleford, Saskatchewan for use as a light freighter.

For several years the hull of the Baroness lay on the shore beneath the C.P.R. bridge providing free lumber for all who chose to pry it away, some of it traveling as far as the Cypress Hills to build ranch houses. It's three by twelve inch dimensions being useful for innumerable projects on the treeless prairie.

The trials of the coal fleet and the sinking of the Lily had proven to be a costly experiment for both Galt and the Winnipeg & Western Transportation Company. There was only one conclusion that could be drawn. The river at Medicine Hat was unsuitable for large scale steam boat navigation., this was just the end of the first era of steamboats on the South Saskatchewan River.

The Northcote beached (left) and damaged after the battle of Batoche. Natural Resources Canada 199543, Glenbow Archives NA-363-51

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The Second Golden Era of Steamboats on the South Saskatchewan

Brian Gale

The golden era of steamboats on the South Saskatchewan began nearly ten years after the first, driven entirely by the personality of one man, Hamilton Ross. Born in 1869, the wealthy son of Sir Charles and Lady Ross of Rossie Castle, he had by age twenty-five run off to sea, sailed around Cape Horn, landed in gold crazed San Francisco, trekked over land by wagon and played polo in Calgary. There in 1897, he built a thirty foot steam launch naming it the "Assiniboia". Intent on sailing it to Winnipeg just for the adventure, he made it as far as Medicine Hat where after several nights of partying with the locals he decided to stay. Apparently the social life in the bustling town was to his liking.

On the left, two views of Horatio Ross's first boat the "Assiniboia". On the right the "Assiniboia II" flying the American flag possibly on July the 4th, an opportunity for a celebration. Esplanade Archives 306.7, 150.22, 206.16

Well capitalized, the wealthy Ross proceeded to build the first Assiniboia Hotel in 1898 in addition to investing in a ranch. Never loosing sight of his boating interests, Captain Ross (as he was soon known) was often seen on excursions up and down the river.I n 1903, he decided to expand and built his first stern wheeler naming it the "Assiniboia II". At seventy feet long and fifteen feet wide the craft was significantly larger than the first. Fitted out with a cabin and associated amenities, Ross was now able to enlarge his social gatherings and host entire parties on board. Then in 1905, on a whim, he decided to take the boat to Winnipeg. Ross made it nearly one thousand miles downstream before getting hung up in shallow swamp land at Cedar Lake just above Lake Winnipeg. Abandoning the boat, Ross and friends continued their journey by rail. That winter the boat was crushed by ice and when Ross returned in the spring there was little left to salvage.

Returning to Medicine Hat in 1906 Ross focused once again on boating. This time he devised a scheme to build a much larger boat. A joint stock company was formed and a number of city officials were convinced that a business case could be made for a large steam boat. The boat would be a multi-purpose vessel, able to haul coal from Lethbridge during spring high water and then used as a pleasure craft for the rest of the summer. To mark the official launch, a half day civic holiday was declared with most of the town showing up to witness the spectcle. The boat was christened the "City of Medicine Hat" by a young Isabel Cousins.

After a few trial runs up and down the river, the coal hauling expeditions were quietly abandoned after it was discovered that the boat could not make it over the rapids at Bow Island. However, that summer many social excursions were made to Galt Island where a pavilion was erected to entertain pleasure seekers and partiers. Occasionally a band was hired and towed in a barge to accompany the crowds on board. to make a go of it, Ross took on day jobs hauling drilling equipment for the blossoming natural gas industry. These were supplemented by evening and weekend social cruises which the captain truly lived for. "Attired in his white spotless ducks, a gregarious personality with an irrepressible effervescence, the captain assumed his most comfortable role – the river's jovial host. With each twilight excursion and two Sunday outings at one o'clock and seven, Ross entertained a hundred passengers with whisky, orchestral music, and fine cigars. The summer of 1907 seemed an

Captain Ross (centre) with boat crew. Esplanade Archives 17.33

Launch day for the "City of Medicine Hat". Esplanade Archives 230.1, 593.1, 70.2.1

endless celebration."

The financial success of the boat was another matter. At one point shareholder William Cousins questioned Ross about the monetary wisdom of providing free alcohol, amounting to more than the revenue from the excursion tickets. To top it off, the shareholders had never put any real money into the business opting instead to co-sign a bank loan to finance the construction. Now the bank was looking for settlement, as the boat operations were not making payments. In the spring of 1908, tiring of the hotel business and bowing to pressure from the boat's shareholders, Ross sold the Assiniboia Hotel and offered to buy out the other owners. He had a new plan and was going to sail the vessel to Winnipeg and use it there as an excursion craft. As a parting gift he offered free passage for as many of his old friends as could fit on board.

With the river in full flood the steamboat set off the first week of June, reaching Saskatoon in record time. There, a series of mishaps sealed the boat's fate. First a submerged cable tore off the ships rudder. Floundering and steaming out of control it then hit a bridge pier and abruptly overturned in the swiftly moving flood water., all aboard escaped by clamoring onto the bridge. Nothing could be done for the boat however, as it lay pinned by the current against the bridge pier. Any hope of salvage disappeared when the boats superstructure and hull began to collapse from the powerful force, marking the unfortunate and ignoble end of the steamboat the "City of Medicine Hat".

Desperate to recapture his loss, Ross blamed the federal government for the submerged cable and sought compensation. Ottawa saw it differently and refused to pay. instead offering Ross a plum job as fisheries inspector in Northern Manitoba., he promptly purchased a fine propeller driven steel boat called the "Sam Brisbane", which he transported to Lake Winnipeg where he started another boating legacy. The waters in Northern Manitoba proved to be friendlier to Ross and he went on to build and purchase a number of boats used for shipping, prospecting and, of course parties. During the height of prohibition when his social gatherings were threatened to become dry, Ross and friends formed the "Church of Omar", thus circumventing regulations as alcohol was allowed for religious celebrations.

For Medicine Hat however, it was the end of large vessels on the South Saskatchewan, the second time the river had proven itself superior to the steamboats. Its raging spring waters to its all too soon meandering knee deep shallowness, the waterway was simply unsuitable for large scale navigation. Soon the railways would dominate transportation as spur lines were run to thousands of communities in the developing west; to this, the upstart automobile was about to flourish and replace even the venerable horse and wagon. steamboats were clearly outclassed by both the forces of nature and advancing technology.

Today, on a hot summer day, over one hundred years later, when you look upon the natural beauty of the valley and the slow moving river, it's not hard to imagine that once upon a time, large stern wheeled steamboats plied the waterway in Medicine Hat.

Damaged beyond repair, the "City of Medicine Hat" lies with a broken back against the bridge in Saskatoon, June 7, 1908.

Esplanade Archives 86.27

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LANGEVIN ✣ CARLSTADT ✣ ALDERSON . . .
. . . vanishing town

By Philip Pype

Fifty-five kilometres north-west of Medicine Hat, just off the TransCanada Highway is a town which has vanished.

Langevin, named for Sir Langevin, an advocate for the Canadian Pacific Railway and the settlement of western Canada, was the location of a CPR station house when the rails were first built. For the first quarter century after the railroad, however, settlement on the prairie was slow, and Langevin did not amount to much.

In 1909, two ranchers, Elmer and Charles England, who saw the fences of the homesteaders coming, moved into the village now called Carlstadt and began a lucrative business as land locators for settlers, dividing up acreage for the family farm and the massive farm outfits. The rampant boosterism of the prairies provided plenty of takers and optimism ran unobstructed.

In six weeks, 166 lots were sold and the clapboard structures grew up from the ground. Soon there were two round-the clock restaurants, three hotels, and a number of smithies, stores, liveries and other businesses; an overnight town.

Four years later, however, the dream died almost as quickly as it had begun. That summer, two massive fires destroyed much of the business district of the town. That fall, there was little or no income from the towns agricultural mainstay as crops almost completely failed, and 1914 also saw the beginning of World War One, which took away many of the town's young men.

The war too, also led to the final naming of this place. Ashamed of a German-sounding name, the townspeople changed it to Alderson, the name of a British commander.

By 1920, Alderson was a shell of its former promise as most farmers had given up. There was no longer a need for all the hotels, stores, and restaurants. Today, nothing remains except evidence of some of the foundations, and the worn grading of the streets.

Main street Carlstadt was a busy place year-round early in the second decade of the twentieth century with a pool hall and bars, the Carlstadt Hotel, and England and England Hay and Grain. These businesses which seemed to appear overnight gave the community a real frontier feel.

Elmer and Charles England, two former ranchers, began their careers as land locators in Carlstadt, 1909. By 1910, as seen in this picture, they were thriving as hundreds of confident would-be farmers and business operators rushed to buy up the land in and around Carlstadt.

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LANGEVIN ◆ CARLSTADT ◆ ALDERSON . . .
. . . vanishing town

The Woollven Store was an institution in Carlstadt, the first business in the town, and the last to disappear. Early in 1909, the town consisted of the train station and the store, which was boarded up in 1950. Sometime in the late 1970s, vandals burnt it to the ground, the

Carlstadt, originally Langevin, was located where it was because of proximity to the CPR mainline. At its high point, people would be getting off the train at all times of the day, supporting two 24-hour restaurants and

As in all communities, various social services were required, like this one-room school house. And like the Woollven store, this school was eventually

McEwan Drugstore is to the left. The bell (right of centre) would be rung in case of fire and water, pumped by either windmill or hand pump would supply the liquid for quenching

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a downtown GROWING UP

By Philip Pype

Streets present the open and visible life of a community. They provide the most public of spaces, where people move from one place to the next, where friends meet, where business is done. Streets show the health and the struggles of a community.

New strong buildings are constructed when a community is growing; they decay when the community is in decline. People celebrate on the streets, but also mourn.

Medicine Hat 's downtown in its early period was a place of thriving, more-so than of struggle. Between the years 1883, with the arrival of rail, to 1914, the beginning of World War One, Medicine Hat grew from a few tents to 14,000 souls. This period was Medicine Hat's childhood, growing fast and healthy.

Medicine Hat was a place where an entrepreneur could make a good living from those who passed through on the train, from those who came to town to work in one of the many factories starting up on the out-skirts, or from those who were attempting ranching, and later, farming.

Thus, Medicine Hat's commercial core; South Railway, Toronto Street (now 3 rd) and Main Street (now 2 nd) reflected the health of the entire community, including the surrounding district.

... but by 1914, Medicine Hat had over-extenced itself. The City was in debt and could not sustain the infrastructure and tax incentives they had given to new factories, many of which closed up shop and left. Also, the Hat was susceptible to outside forces, including a global economic down-turn, and, of course, World War One.

This exhibit provides a brief survey of this early period through the images of the streets of Medicine Hat.

MEDICINE HAT IN 1883
A Tent Town

A Tent Town – 1883 Looking north-east. The beginnings of the railway bridge were put into place before the railroad actually arrived, as bridge construction was a much more intensive process than building the rails across the flat prairie leading into Medicine Hat from the east. The area of Medicine Hat was frequented by First Nations peoples before the arrival of the rails, but the rails

A Quick Start – 1885 View of Medicine Hat from high on the north bank. It did not take long for the first permanent wood structures to appear, although temporary housing was still common. Notice the tents of the Halifax Regiment on the hill above, deployed by the Canadian Government to the Territo-

GROWING UP

Cosmopolitan Hotel – 1885 This was the first of three incarnations of the Cosmopolitan Hotel. It was built on the corner of Toronto (3rd) Street and South Railway, and was a popular place for those on a short stop-over or for those hoping to settle. This first

First Place off the Train – 1887 South Railway had some of the most valuable real estate in town as it was the street people saw when they came in on the train. The Geo. McCuaig store sold everything the settler or adventurer could want, while the City Bakery could provide something special for those who had sched-

GROWING UP

Nancy the Bear – 1889 An early shot of the Medicine Hat rail yards. Notice the bear in the nearest paddock. Nancy, orphaned as a cub, was in the possession of James Hargrave before being given to John Niblock, C.P.R. Superintendent. She was a mascot to the locals and an attraction for

CPR Gardens – 1889 Although it was common in the period for the CPR to have gardens, the Medicine Hat CPR Gardens were touted by the local newspaper, the Medicine Hat Times, as making the local stop "the most attractive depot on the line between the oceans." The local gardens showed visitors and new-comers that it is possible to grow a wide variety of plants and trees in an area explorer John Palliser had stated would make settlement almost

Horse-Drawn Wagons on Dirt Streets — ca. 1900 Parking was not an issue at the turn of the twentieth century in downtown Medicine Hat, although parallel parking did appear to be the standard then too. Although streets were not paved until much later, over 16 thousand feet of sidewalks were built in

GROWING UP

Assiniboia Hotel – pre-1905 The Assiniboia Hotel, the most prominent structure in this stereograph image, was built by Captain Horatio Ross in 1898. Considered palatial, it had steam heating, gas lighting, hardwood and marble fixtures throughout, sample rooms, a billiard room, and even a bowling alley in an attached structure. This Assiniboia burnt down in 1944. The present Assiniboia is located across, and slightly down the street from the original location.

Diverse Architecture – 1902 Every building along South Railway appears unique in design, with a variety of building materials used. Brick was the most popular building material, with the abundance of clay and natural gas in and around Medicine Hat, but wood

Putting up a False Front – 1903 Local politicians, promoters, and businessmen wanted to impress visitors and investors so they would spend their money in Medicine Hat rather than somewhere further down the track. To do so, Hatters had to put on a face of being big, like this façade, complete with mock windows, on the front of William Cousin's Furnishings and Dry Goods. From the train,

And They're Off – 1905 This race was run down South Railway from the Cosmopolitan Hotel to Main (2nd) Street. Locals took part in a wide variety of sport including foot races, hockey, curling, baseball, tennis, and boating. Donkey racing never gathered a following. Notice that there are no women at this race.

Orangemen March – July 12, 1903 The Orangemen, marching down Toronto (3rd) Street. The Protestant Orangemen are celebrating the anniversary of the Battle of Boyne, when Protestant William of Orange defeated Catholic James II at the River Boyne in 1690. The Orangemen remember the battle as a great victory over Catholics, resulting in the sovereignty of parliament and the 'protestant monarchy', while Catholics mourn it as a great disaster when

GROWING UP

Water Wagon – 1905 Frank Worthy and his dog used this, the last horse-driven water wagon in Medicine Hat, to deliver water from the river to businesses and homes. A filtration plant and pipes were constructed in 1906 as river water was not always of good quality. The waterworks were expanded in 1907, going from handling 1.2 million gallons per day to

Sullied Streets — ca. 1902 Main (2nd) Street looking west. At the beginning of the twentieth century, most homes in Medicine Hat still had a barn out back, with cattle that needed to be walked out to pasture each day through the streets, leaving their messes behind. In the background one can make out St. John's Presbyterian Church, built in 1902.

GROWING UP

The Circus Comes to Town – ca. 1910 Although local performers and performances were popular, nothing was like when a traveling show came to town, especially something like this circus, moving down Toronto (3rd) Street.

Novelty of Wealth – 1912 This parade of 12 Oakland cars occurred in 1912. At the time, to see so many autos on the street was a novelty as the first Model-T rolled off the assembly line only four years earlier. However, only wealthier Hatters could afford such vehicles. Travel by horse and foot remained the most common forms of transportation.

Market Square – 1910 The market square was located behind the Assiniboia Hotel on what would now be the 600 block of 4th St. S.E.. This image is of a cattle auction, but the market square was a place local producers would sell vegetables of crafts as well.

GROWING UP

Happy 45th Canada – July 1, 1912 Dominion Day was always a big celebration in Medicine Hat. The post office was not the only building decorated for the occasion as streamers were run throughout the commercial district. To celebrate the day in 1912, the City spent $2000 on a fireworks display. One would think Canada's 50th would have been even bigger, but by 1917 the country was into the third year of World War One and the local economy had soured.

A Busy Metropolis – ca. 1912 By 1912, Medicine Hat was growing extremely quickly, and the population claimed higher levels of sophistication. The Monarch Theatre, still located in the same building today, is shown here, third business in. Opening in 1911, it's 500 seats were often filled two or three performances a night.

GROWING UP

Along the Avenue – 1913 Not only the streets were busy. This photo of 4th Avenue (now 6th Avenue), actually looking south, not east, shows some of early Medicine Hat's most prominent buildings. Following along the west side of the street there is City Hall, the Canadian Bank of Commerce building, the Cypress Club, Century Methodist Church, and the Hull

Businesses Abound – 1913 The most prominent structure in this picture, now part of the Assiniboia Hotel, was the Huckvale-Hooper Block. Close to 30 businesses and agencies including realtors, investment companies, a barber, barristers, architects, contractors, and

GROWING UP

Main Street –1913 A glimpse down Main (2nd) Street to the rail arms. Drivers and pedestrians were able to cross the rail yard on Main, although delays could be long when trains came in and out of the station.

3rd CMR — 1915 Canada automatically was at war midnight August 4, 1914 as the motherland, Great Britain declared war on Germany. This photo is of the 3rd Canadian Mounted Rifles, made up largely of local men. 325 local men never made it home.

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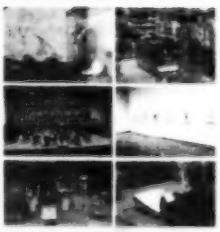

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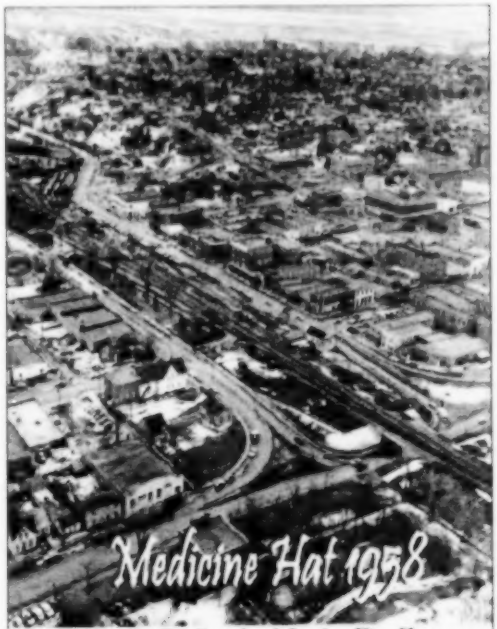

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